

Scope and Standards of Public Health Nursing Practice

Public Health Nursing is the practice of promoting and protecting the health of populations using knowledge from nursing, social, and public health sciences. It is population focused, community-oriented nursing practice. The goal of public health nursing is the prevention of disease and disability for all people through the creation of conditions in which people can be healthy.

Tenets (doctrine) of Public Health Nursing

1. Population based assessment, policy development, and assurance processes are systematic and comprehensive, including:

- A. consideration of community capacity**
- B. personal or lifestyle health practices**
- C. human biology**
- D. health services**
- E. social, economic, physical, and environmental factors as they affect the population's health**

EXAMPLE: Evaluating health trends and risk factors of population groups and determining priorities for targeted interventions

This assessment process includes a review of the needs, strengths, and expectations of all of the people and is guided by epidemiological methods.

2. All processes must include partnering with representatives of the people.

This assures that the interpretation of the data, policy decisions, and planning of intervention strategies reflect the perspectives, priorities, and values of the people.

EXAMPLE: Working with specific groups to develop public policy and targeted health promotion and disease prevention activities

3. Primary prevention is given priority. This includes health promotion and health protection strategies.

4. Intervention strategies are selected to create healthy environmental, social and economic conditions in which people can thrive.

Public Health Nurses concentrate on interventions aimed at improving environments to benefit the health of the population. Interventions include educational, community development, social engineering, as well as policy development and enforcement strategies. Interventions tend to emerge from the political or community participation process and result in governmental policies and laws, administrative rules, and budget priorities.

5. Public Health Nursing practice includes an obligation to actively reach out to all who might benefit from an intervention or service. Often, those most likely to benefit are those who are the most marginal recipients

6. **The dominant concern and obligation is for the greater good of all the people, or the population as a whole.** Because the unit of care for this specialty is the population, consideration of what is in the best interest of the whole takes priority over the best interest of an individual or a group. Public Health Nurses promote the health of individuals, but this responsibility is secondary to their obligation to promote the health of the population.
7. **Stewardship and allocation of available resources supports the maximum population health benefit gain.** Provision of information about cost effectiveness of potential intervention strategies, information about potential outcomes, and information about potential outcomes of policy decisions.
8. **The health of the people is most effectively promoted and protected through collaboration with members of other professions and organizations.** Creating conditions in which people can be healthy is very complex, and resource intensive. PHN's join with experts from multiple professions and organizations to improve population health.

Public Health Nurses are distinguished from other nursing specialties by their adherence to all 8 tenets of public health nursing.

It is not the location of care, but the focus of care that differentiates PHN practice from other specialty areas of practice.

Standards of Care

Assessment:

Diagnosis

Outcomes Identification

Planning

Assurance

Evaluation